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**Inventory For
Manuscript Collection
MS-339**

**Kennebec Steamboat Company Account Books
Inclusive dates: 1866-1893**

by
Anastasia S. Weigle
October 2012

Shelf feet: 0.25
Number of boxes: 1
Accession No. 78.57

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Abstract

Kennebec Steamboat Company

Account books, 1865-1890

1 box (.25 linear feet)

Coastal and river steamboat company, Kennebec River, Maine

Various accounts for screw steamers *Islander* and *Magnet* and sidewheel steamers *Kennebec* and *Star of the East* owned and operated by the Kennebec Steamboat Company. Accounts include passenger books, bills paid, repairs and a time book. The collection is grouped into four series: Series I: *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer); Series II: *Magnet* (Screw steamer); Series III: *Islander* (Screw steamer) and Series IV: *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer).

Donated by Charles E. Burden

MS-339, Accession No. 78.57.

Related material available at repository, MS-41, MS-63

Finding aid available in repository, item level control.

Added Entries—person:

Collins, Capt. Jason, *Captain*

Added Entries—corporate bodies (including vessels):

Clarion (Screw steamer)

Della Collins (Sternwheel steamer)

Eastern Queen (Sidewheel steamer)

Islander (Screw steamer)

Magnet (Screw steamer)

Star of the East (Sidewheel steamer)

Kennebec (Sidewheel steamer)

Kennebec Steamboat Company

Kennebec & Boothbay Steamboat Company

Sagadahoc (Sidewheel steamer)

Added entries—places:

Gardiner (ME)

Added entries—key terms:

Account books

Accounts

Coastwise navigation

Steamboat lines

Steamboats

Wages

Acquisition

The steamer accounts books were donated by Charles E. Burden on August 2, 1978, accession nos. 78.56.8—11, 78.57.38, 78.57.41 and 78.57.42. This was part of a large collection of papers and objects for a steamers exhibition.

Provenance

Charles Burden purchased these items from John Newton of Wiscasset Antiques.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research.

Physical Condition

The steamer accounts are in fairly good condition. The *Islander* (Screw steamer) passenger book has torn out/missing pages from the front and back. A blank book for the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer) has a tear on the back cover. The account book for the *Magnet* (Screw steamer) has a number of torn out/missing pages from the front. The passenger account book for the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) has torn out/missing pages in the front of the book.

Biographical Notes

Captain Jason Collins (1817-1907). Captain Jason Collins, son of James Collins (1796-1862) and Betsey E. Tyler (1796-1856), was born February 22, 1817 in Gardiner, Maine. His father Capt. James Collins worked for the Kennebec Steamboat Service. He commanded the *Governor* (Steamer) in the spring of 1855 and in 1857 commanded the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer). In the spring of 1857, Capt. James Collins began his trips to Boston. In 1860, the *Eastern Queen* needed to be rebuilt due to a fire in which she was partly burned. While being rebuilt, *State of Maine* was chartered to take over the Boston trips. Capt. James Collins took command of the steamer and when the sidewheel steamer *Eastern Queen* resumed her trips in November of 1860, Capt. James Collins took her over again. Capt. James Collins died April 17, 1861 at which time his son, Capt. Jason Collins took over the command of the sidewheel steamer *Eastern Queen*.¹

Capt. Jason Collins married Hannah Kenniston on February 8, 1843. Hannah was born in Readfield, Maine, the daughter of Nathaniel and Eliza (Springer) Kenniston.¹⁰ Together they had seven children—five daughters and two sons—Anna A. (1845-1913), Eunice Anna (1848-1849), Blanch L. (1854-1874), Idella H. “Della” (1857-1935) and Eugenia W. “Jenny” (1860-1907), James E. (1858-1869) and Wallace J. (1860-?).^{1,2}

Capt. Jason Collins' seafaring career spanned 70 years with 66 of those years aboard steamboats. He went to sea at the age of 15 on various vessels coastal and abroad. His first experience was aboard the screw steamer *Governor* that took the Portland and Bangor route and later between Portland and St. John, NB. He was also a crewman aboard the sidewheel steamer *Joseph Whitney* that took the route between Boston and Baltimore. He played a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of passengers when the steamer *New England* hit a lime-laden schooner off Boone Island in 1837.⁴

After this incident, Capt. Jason Collins went to the Pacific coast as engineer of a steamer running between San Francisco and China. He returned to Maine and was pilot for the 1856 built sidewheel steamer *State of Maine*, the steamer *Union* and the sidewheel steamer *Eastern Queen*. He was assistant engineer and then chief engineer for the *Eastern Queen* when his father was captain aboard the vessel. When his father died in 1861, he took command of the *Eastern Queen* until 1865.^{3,4}

In 1866, he took command of the brand new sidewheel steamer *Star of the East* and stayed with her for 23 years before taking over the sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* for 13 years running between Boston and Gardiner.

Capt. Jason Collins was owner and director/president in the Kennebec Steamship Company and retired from that position in 1902. He was the oldest steamboat company President in the United States. In 1902, he was engaged in supervision of the construction of the screw steamer *Ransom B. Fuller* in Bath, Maine. Capt. Jason Collins was a very well respected and capable man in the seafaring business. He died at the age of 90 on August 29, 1907.

Reference cited:

1. The Centennial of Gardiner: An account of the Exercises at the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation the town June 25, 1903. (p. 76)
2. Ancestry.com
3. River Transportation. <http://www.gardinermainstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/B4-5-River-Transportation-copy.pdf>
4. Capt. Jason Collins, Death of Veteran Steamboat Commander of the Kennebec Valley This Week. *Bath Independent*, 13 August 1907.

Historical Notes

Kennebec Steamboat Company

The Kennebec and Boston Steam Navigation Company (a stock company) was formed in Gardiner, 1835-1836. The steamer the *New England* (Sidewheel steamer) was purchased by them to run from Gardiner to Boston. Captain Kimball was shipmaster of the *New England* (Sidewheel steamer) while young Captain Jason Collins was the fireman. This Gardiner to Boston course became known as the Kennebec to Boston river run. Passengers began to be transported along this route in 1841.

The Kennebec and Boston Steamboat Company was formed by Gardiner and Hallowell residents in 1857. Captain Collins was part owner and director of the Kennebec Steamboat Company. The *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was their first

steamer. Captain Collins ran the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) for the company. Steamboats traveled to and from Bath, Richmond, Gardiner, Augusta, Portland, Hallowell and Boston. Passengers voyaged on vessels such as the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Della Collins* (Sternwheel steamer), *Governor* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger).

Competition became fierce due to the popularity and profit incurred by steamboat travels. The Bath Company vessels *Daniel Webster* (Sidewheel steamer) and *Eastern City* (Sidewheel steamer) rivaled the Kennebec Steamship Company in 1866 running a daily line to Boston with reduced fares. Countless people traveled to Boston aboard these vessels as a result. The Kennebec Company held its own via the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) and *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) forcing the Bath Company to withdraw. The Kennebec Steamboat Company took over steamboat travel along this route for thirty-seven years. The *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was the only boat on the Kennebec route from 1870 to 1889 making two trips weekly. In 1889, the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was added to the line making two trips weekly as well. The *Sagadahoc* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) ex. *Star of the East* and *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) provided service in the 1890s. The two steamers made ninety-six round trips from Boston to Gardiner in 1892. The Kennebec Steamboat Company sold out to the Eastern Steamship Company in 1901.

Reference

1. "Centennial of Steamboating on the Kennebec—Boston Fare Once 25 Cents." *Lewiston Journal*. Maine Maritime Museum. Collection 54. Box 84. Steamboat Lines.
2. <http://www.lighthouse.cc/perkins/history.html>.
3. <http://www.augustamaine.gov/>
4. Kingsbury, Henry D. and Simeon L. Deyo, eds. *Illustrated History of Kennebec County Maine: 1625-1799-1892*. New York: H. W. Blake and Company, 1892.
The Centennial of Gardiner: An Account of the Exercises at the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town, June 25, 1903. Gardiner, Maine: 1903.

Star of the East (Sidewheel steamer) built 1866

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the Kennebec Steamboat Company provided service between the Kennebec River ports and Boston. John Englis of New York was asked by the company to build a new steamer to be ready for the 1866 season. The new sidewheel steamer was launched from John Englis yard on Tenth Street, East River on December 2 1865. Her name at that time was the *Eastern Star* (Sidewheel steamer) and was owned by Isaac Rich of Boston. After her successful trial trip on April 25 1866, Captain Jason Collins took command of her and she was renamed *Star of the East*. In 1869, her new owners were Captain Collins and Peter G. Bradstreet of Gardner, Maine; Isaac Rick, Thomas A. Rich, and Andrew Pierce, all three of Boston; Edward S. Dane of Brookline; Aaron B. Vanever of Malden; and Thomas W. Pierce of Topsfield, Massachusetts.¹

The sidewheel steamer *Star of the East* cost \$180,000 and was considered the best in what a coastwise passenger vessel should look like. She was larger and more luxurious than her predecessor, the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer). She Measured 1,413 gross tons with a length of 244.2 feet, a breadth of 352 feet and depth of hold 12.8 feet.

Between 1866 and 1889, the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East*, under the command of Capt. Jason Collins, made trips between Kennebec and Boston. During the winters, Capt. Jason Collins ran the sidewheel steamer *Eastern Queen* from Bath, Maine.

In October 1875, the *Star of the East* struck the schooner *A. Hammond* off Gloucester taking out her main rigging. In August 1878, the *Star of the East* struck a schooner off Bowdoinham while traveling down river causing some damage to the steamer. On her return trip she hit another schooner loaded with ice bound for Washington, D.C. This caused damage to the schooner's deck. In 1882, she struck the Boston three-mast schooner *Edward R. Emerson* that, at the time, was unloading coal in June. Sadly, the schooner's booms swung and fatally struck a passenger.¹

Based on Capt. Collins passenger account book, the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East*, traveling between Gardiner, Maine and Boston, Massachusetts during the seasons between 1883 and 1888, carried in 158,881 passengers.²

<i>Commence Date</i>	<i>Ending Date</i>	<i>No. of Passengers</i>
July 1, 1883	December 1, 1883	23,628
April 21, 1884	December 2, 1884	26,681
April 21, 1885	December 4, 1885	27, 032
April 30, 1886	December 6, 1886	26,542
May 3, 1887	December 3, 1887	27,280
April 21, 1888	November 24, 1888	27, 718
<i>Total Passengers between 1883-1888</i>		158,881

The sidewheel steamer *Star of the East* ran for 25 years between July 1866 and June 1891. On June 23, she was refitted, refurnished, and given a new coat of paint before being renamed *Sagadahoc*.

References cited:

1. Baker (1973). A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region. Vol. II. Bath, ME: Marine Research Society of Bath.
2. Passenger Account Book for *Star of the East*. Capt. Jason Collins. MS-183, folder 1.

Magnet (Screw steamer) built 1871

The screw steamer *Magnet* was built in 1871 in Portland, Maine. She was considered a day boat. The *Magnet* was a small steamer weighing 23.55 gross tons, 11.77 net tons with a nominal horsepower of 25. Very little is known about her history. She was enrolled in Bath in 1874 and her master was Captain Anthony Sprague. The same parties who had an interest in the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East*, which included Capt. Jason Collins, also owned the *Magnet*. The *Magnet* succeeded the steamer *Augusta* in 1874.¹ Owners of the *Magnet* placed her on the route from Augusta to Boothbay. In 1885, the screw steamers *Henry Morrison*, *Mabel F.* and *Islander* replaced the *Magnet*.²

References cites:

1. Baker (1973). A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region. Vol. II. Bath, ME: Marine Research Society of Bath.
2. “*Steamboating on the Kennebec.*” *Bath Daily Times*, 3 May 1886.

Islander (Screw steamer) built 1883

The Kennebec river passenger screw steamer *Islander* was the first of three steamers by that name, was built in 1883 at Bath, Maine. Her builder was the famous yacht builder, Charles B. Harrington. She was described as:

*“having two cabins, the ladies’ being finished and furnished in a most elegant manner and containing all the modern improvements. In connection with this cabin are several small rooms provided with all the advantages and comforts of home, thus making it as pleasant for invalids as for the well and hearty.”*²

The 106-foot, 118 gross ton screw steamer, owned by the Kennebec & Boothbay Steamboat Company, was launched on May 3, 1883 as a day boat, a ferry service carrying passengers between Bath and the Boothbay Harbor.

Captain Leonard Williams took the screw steamer *Islander* out on her first trip. During a fog three weeks after her first run, “*she ran on a reef near Capital Island ripping her keel and bottom planking and setting her engine up 11 inches.*”¹ After her repairs from this incident, the screw steamer was then commanded by William Curtis, who had also commanded the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East* at one time. *Islander* continued to offer passengers service between Boothbay and her Islands, Augusta, Hallowell, Richmond, Bath and Gardiner. In March 1890, the *Islander* was taken off the Augusta—Boothbay route and employed as a transfer boat between Popham and Boothbay. The *Islander* was later commanded by Captain Ellra Dunton.

In 1902, the *Islander* was owned by the Seaconnet Lines running out of Providence, Rhode Island. By 1910, the she was reported sold and ran out of Provincetown. In 1925 her homeport was Providence, Rhode Island.¹

References cited:

1. Baker (1973). A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region. Vol. II. Bath, ME: Marine Research Society of Bath.
2. “*Steamer Islander Shows Her Heals to a Sixteen-Knot Side Wheeler.*” *Bath Daily Times*, 2 September 1902.

Kennebec (Sidewheel steamer) built 1889

The sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* was built in Bath, Maine in 1889 by the New England Company for the Kennebec Steamboat Company. She was to be a companion boat to the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer.) Her official launch date was March 20, 1889. William Potter Pattee, a naval draughtsman and master shipbuilder for the firm Pattee & Rideout designed the *Kennebec*. Constructed of wood and iron, the sidewheel steamer, *Kennebec* was 1,652 gross tons, had a 250-foot keel and was 60 feet in breadth.

Captain Jason Collins, who oversaw the building of the sidewheel steamer, commanded her. The *Kennebec* was 12 feet longer and 2.4 feet wider than the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East*. However, she was only 0.3 feet deeper due to the sawdust bottom of the river, which prevented the steamer from going any deeper.¹

The sidewheel steamer *Kennebec*'s 800 horse-power engine was built by Quintard Iron Works of New York. Her boiler, the largest built in Maine to that time, was built by South Division of the Bath Iron Works.¹

Like the sidewheel steamer *Star of the East*, the *Kennebec* had her share of accidents and mishaps. On Sunday July 12, 1891, the *Kennebec* broke her rudder coming into Popham pier. There was not enough room for the sidewheel steamer to make fast and her stern swung on the sand causing her rudder to break. She was towed to Bath, placed on a marine railway and her rudder replaced. The *Kennebec* was back "on route" the following Friday, July 17.²

The *Kennebec* was grounded on October 3, 1893 at Pond Island. In an attempt to pass between two schooners through a small channel upon Pond Island, she found herself too near the short. In trying to get out, her stern became grounded on the beach. Although the *Kennebec* was able to pull herself off only to realize her steering gear was disabled. The tug *Clara Clarita* came to her assistance towing the *Kennebec* to Bath for repairs. The sternwheel steamer *Della Collins* finished the trip for the *Kennebec* by taking the passengers and freight to Gardiner.³

In 1905, the sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* was sold to Fall River, Rhode Island where she joined the fleet of the Enterprise Transportation Company. The Enterprise Transportation Company was starting a new line of steamers between the city of River Falls and New York. Capt. George W. Colby would be taking command of the *Kennebec*.

By 1910-1911, she was making runs to Long Island Sound. On January 2, 1911, during a dense fog, the *Kennebec*, now owned by the Enterprise Transportation Company, was found piled up on Pasque Island, Vineyard Sound, lashed by gale. The revenue cutter *Acushnet* and tug *Underwriter* worked alongside the vessel in an attempt to free her. After 17 days, she was pulled into deep water and towed to Tarpaulin Cove for repairs.⁴ The sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* retired in 1911 after a long run of 22 years.

References cited:

1. Baker (1973). A Maritime History of Bath, Maine and the Kennebec River Region. Vol. II. Bath, ME: Marine Research Society of Bath.
2. *Bath Independent*, 15 July 1891
3. *Bath Independent*, 3 October 3 1893.
4. "Kennebec in Trouble." *Bath Daily Times*, 2 January 1911 and "The Kennebec Floated." *Bath Daily Times*, 19 January 1911.

Scope and Content

The collection of steamer accounts include a pocket account book of repairs for the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) dated 1866-67 and a passengers account book dated 1884-1888. The repair account book also includes repairs for the sternwheel

steamer *Della Collins* and steamer *Clarion*, both belonging to the Kennebec Steamboat Company. The passengers account book for the *Star of the East* also includes passenger accounts for the sternwheel steamer *Della Collins* between 1885 and 1888 and the screw steamer *Islander* between 1886 and 1888.

There is an account book for the *Magnet* (screw steamer) dated 1874 and includes memoranda of bills with a Mr. Chas. White and an account with Jason Collins, who had ownership of the *Magnet* (Screw steamer).

There is an account book for bills paid in the 1888 season for the screw steamer *Islander*. The front cover states, "*Bills paid for the season of 1888. Supplies, repairs & C&C.*" However, inside the book only lists tickets on hand for the screw steamer *Islander*, not repairs. There is also one seaman's time book for 1883. Two blank forms were found inside the time book: an application for license and a Power of Attorney for proxy vote in the Kennebec Central R. R. Company.

There is one passenger book for the sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* dated 1890-1893. This includes "river" passengers. The book also includes the number of all passengers for the sidewheel steamer *Sagadahoc* during those same years. This book shows that in 1893 the number of passengers listed for the *Kennebec* was 32,848 with 11,920 for the *Sagadahoc* bringing in a total of 44,768. However, it then give 1/5 of these numbers to the sternwheel steamer *Della Collins* (8,953). There is also one small lank book titled "Kennebec Steamboat Co. Steamer Kennebec."

The sidewheel steamers *Kennebec* and *Star of the East* were night boats carrying passengers to Boston. One passenger book for the sidewheel steamer *Kennebec* dated 1890-1893 had "river" passengers. The *Kennebec*, on its way down to Boston, would make stops along the way at various towns such as Bath or Augusta. "River" passengers are those who would get off at these local ports. Sometimes a church group or family would rent a steamer for a day trip to one of the islands. This was identified as an "excursion" in the account books. The screw steamers *Islander* and *Magnet* were day boats and would be used for excursions.

Processing Notes

The steamer accounts were organized in chronological order and placed in folders to follow the history of the vessels. Each steamer is placed in it's own series:

Series I: *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) built 1866

Series II: *Magnet* (Screw steamer) built 1871

Series III: *Islander* (Screw steamer) built 1883

Series IV: *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer) built 1889

**MS-339 Steamer Accounts
Container List**

Box# Folder#

Series I. *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) built 1866

- 1 1 Account book of repairs, 1866-67
 Number of Passengers book 1884-1888

Series II. *Magnet* (Screw steamer) built 1871

- 2 Account book, 1874

Series III. *Islander* (Screw steamer) built 1883

- 3 Seaman's Time Book, 1883
 Account book of bills paid, 1888
 Loose papers

Series IV. *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer) built 1889

- 4 Blank book, n.d.
 Number of passengers book, 1890-1893